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Reducing Recidivism Rates through Vocational Education and Training

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Abstract

Inmates who had enrolled in most of educational programme while incarcerated had lower recidivism rates than those who did not attend the programme. Inmates need education programme that not only teach them to read and write but also provide them with the necessary skills that promote a positive transition to society when they are released. Efforts in this direction would help promote better participation of inmates in all prison education programmes and will go along away to help the prisoner rehabilitation processes. This paper focus on how Vocational education and training reduces recidivism.

Keywords: Reducing, Recidivism Rates, Vocational Education and Training.

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1.1. *Introduction*

The aim of establishing prison institutions all over the world is to provide a rehabilitation and correctional facility for the convict there by providing an effective environment that reduces the risk of reoffending. Many offenders have education and skills levels below average standard are more likely to be unemployed who has an impact on their health and ability to find housing.

1.2. *Vocational education and training*

The introduction of vocational education and training as part of the prisoner rehabilitation offers opportunities for offenders to increase the likely hood of successful reintegration in to the community and reducing the risk of reoffending(2). Providing offenders with Vocational education and training will provide significant benefit in addressing issues that caused offences as well as reduces their recidivism rate.

Offender's lack of educational attainment negatively has impacts on their employment prospect which also negatively has effect on their physical and mental issues. Providing motivated offenders the opportunity to educate themselves, the offender's life can improve through the experiences of discipline, instilling confidence and stability (11).

According to (17), meta-analysis was conducted to examine the association between vocational education and training and reduction in recidivism, improvement in employment after release from prison. The findings support the premise that receiving correction education while incarceration reduces individuals risks of recidivism. They researchers also found that those receiving Vocational education and training had improved odds of obtaining employment after release, the findings include: correctional education improves chances of not returning to prison, inmates who participated in correctional education programmed had 43% lower odds of recidivism than those who did not participate. This translates to a reduction in the risk of recidivism of 13%, providing correctional education can be cost effective when it comes to reducing recidivism.

A Queensland study, based on over 1,800 people who returned to custody within three years was undertaken of the links between prisoner's participation in Vocational training programmed and their chances of returning to prison. It found that 32 percent of prisoners who did not participate in vocational training programed before their initial release returned to custody within two years while only 23 percent of vocational training programed participants returned (2).

Recidivism: habitual offending, an act of a person repeating an undesirable behavior after he has either experienced negative consequences of that behavior. It is also used to refer to percentage of prisoners who are re-arrested for a similar offence (12).

Vocational Training: refers to a training which equips trainees with the process of manipulative skills in a chosen occupation (14). (15) Defines vocational education as "any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations". That is to say vocational education provides skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for effective employment in specific occupations.

Vocational education can be conceived as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of educational process involving, in addition to general education, the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (6)

1.3. *Benefits of vocational education and training in prison*

Studies have address why vocational education and training programmed are successful for reducing recidivism rates and improving opportunity for (13). Discussion focus on two main important reasons: first training increases the amount of human capital that a parolee can offer potential employees, and second that earning a certificate in any field "signals" to potential employers a seriousness that compensates in part for the stigma of a criminal record (7)

- **Human capital:** investment in human capital is probably the most common cited reason for assigning inmate to a vocational education and training. Theorist about human capital emphasize that a trained worker is worth more to the employer as an employee than one who is not trained or skilled. The role of education for creating human capital is explicitly address in the vocational education curricular evaluated here by an insistence that a rigorous range of literacy, general education/ employability skills, hands on and technical skills be part of the courses (7)

The insistence is important because potential employees who have mastered particular skills are more valuable to employers, are more likely to be hired, are more likely to generate profits from companies and are likely to generate good wages for the employee. Skilled employees bring to an employer "human capital " that people without such training do not have in a good terms of knowledge and skill level. Notably such skills include basic protocols needed in a good employee such as punctuality, co - cooperativeness, timeliness and team-work.

- **Certification:** certification and criminal records are sometimes referred to in labour market as "signal" (8). Licenses, certificates and other documents signal to potential employees that a potential employee likely has specific skills, interests and commitment to a profession whereas others may not. Possession of a nationally recognized certification helps overcome the stigma of a criminal record. Formal certification as part of an education programed in prison is particularly important.

1.4 How vocational education reduces recidivism

Vocational education and training reduces recidivism rates by providing inmates with the technical skills, literacy and numeracy courses, as well as motivation and employment opportunity:

- **Technical skills:** prisoners believed that as well as providing technical skills, the courses also improved their communication and organizational skills, all of which would help find employment and reintegrate in to the community upon release. A technical skill is a skill that is required for the accomplishment of a specific task (21). Barriers to undertaking or completing vocational training courses include the need for prisoner to undertake offending behaviour programed and desire to earn money through paid prison work. Other factors were short sentences (under 12 months) and long waiting lists of courses, being transferred to another centre without much more notice or being release early.
- **Literacy and numeracy:** the educational programme offer literacy and numeracy courses as well as higher-level qualifications such as Vocational training Diplomas. The completion rate was found to be over 80 percent. The high completion rate was attributed to: undertaking a risk assessment and looking at the sentence management plan to determine the educational and vocational training needs of offenders, offering the courses as modules, having dedicated training workshops, promoting the employment opportunities provided by the training, recognizing the achievements of trainees who completed the course.
- **Motivation:** Another factor that will determine an offender's recidivism is the motivation for the offender to change (7). Argued that the analysis of former offenders indicated that their decision to change was a significant factor in them not re-offending. Offenders with no motivation had fatalistic and respondent attitudes towards their criminality whereas motivated offenders were able to identify and make sense of their criminality.

(7) Argues that for some offenders, the motivation to change may need to include the severing of negative social bonds, as he argues that this may have been a factor in their original offending (1). describes offender's motivation to change as being instrumental in improving an offender's mental health as they are more focused on goals and resilient to negative external and social impacts in their lives.

In order for Technical and vocational education to benefit the offender, it is important for it to be tailored and focused on the needs of the offender; an example of this is the needs surrounding female offenders. Gordon and

Weldon (9), Argues that issues surrounding female offenders are compounded by other issues that can include being single percent family rejection, history of physical or sexual abuse as well as a high prevalence of mental health issues.

A female offender's history of physical and sexual abuse is an issue that will regulate training and education programed to be specifically tailored towards them for optimal effectiveness. Olaitan (14) trainers and educators will need to present their programmed in a manner that is inclusive, fair and consistent.

- **Employment opportunity:** (17), describes how training and education offered to offenders needs to be relevant to employment opportunities that exist in the location that the offender lives and is likely to be employed in. An example of this is for offenders in areas with high tourism, hospitality courses would be the focus likewise, and vocational training in rural areas would focus on agriculture and forestry

Preparing offenders for employment through vocational education and training alone may not be enough to get them in to the employment market (16), describe how offenders, especially those who have been incarcerated, may have significant issues that inhibit their ability to find employment. These may include lack of recent employment experiences, being excluded from certain types of employment, as well as the potential to weaken social connections that may lead to employment.

Poor educational attainment coupled with poor employment record prospects on an offender's mental health (9), indicates that 36% of male police detainee and 53% of female police detainees reported either being diagnosed with a mental or being treated for a mental illness.

(3), describe how 01 percent of male of male offenders in prison present symptoms of depression, while 25 percent suffer major depression. (9) Describes how many offenders with mental health issues may have strained issue relations with their families and friends. This may leave them alone coping with factors that may include inadequate employment and housing, money management issues as well as medication management. Offenders benefit from training and education from improvement to their mental health. (5) Describes how offenders who participate in education programmes illustrate positive psychological traits that include self-reliance, autonomy and independence. A study in Australian institute of criminology (1) data illustrate that while those with low level of educational attainment have a higher probability of becoming a police detainee, those with higher educational attainment have a lower probability of becoming a police detainee. This is highlighted by the fact that while 40 percent of male police detainees and 51percent of female police detainee had completed ten years or less. The number of male and female police detainees more than halved had completed 11or 12 years. For those who completed university, the level of female police detainees was five percent while male police detainees were at four percent.

However while low educational standards are of great concern of particular role is the fact that many offenders lack even the basic fundamentals of education such as literacy skills. Offenders who participate in vocational training and education have lower recidivism rates than offenders who do not participate (9), argue that those offenders who participated in prison education programme had recidivism rate at four percent. This is contrast to 65 percent recidivism rate for those who did not participate in prison education programme

Offenders benefit from training and education from improvement to cognitive functioning and job prospects. (4) State that cognitive strategy that is the ability of individuals to analytically interpret information and enhanced the more the individuals is prepared to further their education. Higher cognitive functioning is of great importance in relation to individuals adapting to higher education and the workplace. As offenders prepare themselves to step back in to his or her community, they search within for a renewed sense of self image and plan to stay clear of criminal behaviour. It has been implied that offenders returning to the community unprepared and uneducated results in bitter individuals that could be a further threat to public safety and increase recidivism rates which are costly.

Recommendations

Prison institutions should be provided with all the facilities needed for vocational education and training thus; standard workshops, modern facilities and as well improved remuneration for all the stake holders. There should be regular evaluation of the programed to determine the strength and weakness of the programed. Non-governmental organization should be involved in funding and supervising the programed. All trained inmates should be automatically employed either in public or cooperate bodies after released. No stigmatization for the ex-convicts in

the society should be allowed. They should be fully re-integrated, be certified in accordance with the National Vocational Qualification guide.

Conclusion

Vocational education and training as part of the prisoner rehabilitation offers opportunities for offenders to increase the likely hood of successful re-integration in to the community and reducing the risk of re-offending. TVE will provide significant benefit in addressing issues that caused offences as well as reduces their recidivism rate. Therefore providing inmates with vocational education and training is pathway to reduce recidivism

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